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ABSTRACT

Despite growing interest in children's policy and in research regarding childhood bilingualism and language acquisition, the early care and education of linguistically and culturally diverse preschoolers remains a matter of much concern. Relative inattention at the level of policy to the needs and interests of such children is due to several causes, including widely and tenaciously held personal beliefs, political ideologies, misperceptions regarding the lack of a demographic imperative, and disciplinary fragmentation among academics. Four fundamental isssues must be addressed if policy and practice in this domain are to improve. The issues are: (1) socialization, resocialization, and the family/child relationship; (2) modalities of instruction; (3) contextually discontinuous strategies; and (4) sub-system creation versus system reform. Each issue is discussed. Action principles and leadership strategies are presented in hopes of moving an action agenda to ensure that linguistically and culturally diverse preschoolers have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool experiences. Thirty-six references are included. (RH)

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EDUCATING CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE PRESCHOOLERS: MOVING THE AGENDA

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EDUCATING CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVER PRESCHOOLERS: MOVING THE AGENDA

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RUNNING HEAD: MOVING THE AGENDA

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ABSTRACT

Despite growing interest in children's policy and in research regarding childhood bilingualism and language acquisition, much concern exists regarding the early care and education of linguistically and culturally diverse preschoolers. This article attributes comparative policy inattention to linguistically and culturally diverse preschoolers to several causes including widely and tenaciously held-personal beliefs, political ideologies, misperceptions regarding the lack of a demographic imperative, and academic disciplinary fragmentation. After questioning these causes, the authors explore the current state of today's practice, suggesting that four fundamental issues must be addressed if policy and practice in this domain is to improve: 1) Socialization, resocialization and the family/child relationship; 2) Modalities of instruction; 3) Contextually discontinuous strategies; and 4) Sub-system creation vs. system reform. Each issue is discussed and action principles and leadership strategies are presented in hopes of moving an action agenda to assure linguistically and culturally diverse preschoolers access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool experiences.

EDUCATING CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE PRESCHOOLERS: MOVING THE AGENDA

"As for the future, your task is not to foresee but to enable it."

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

TODAY'S ZEITGEIST

Never has the nation been more concerned about the care and education of its young children. One can hardly pick up a paper, read a popular news weekly, or watch television without becoming aware of the nation's revived concern for the status of its young. Whether motivated by the onslaught of middle class women into the workforce and concomitant business concern about child care supply or by promising data that attest to the benefits of high quality early intervention for low-income children, child care and early education have come to be regarded as social penicillin, a near cure-all for a multitude of social problems.

Indeed, this commitment to young children is manifest in policy initiatives at the federal and state level. The 101st Congress ushered in a new era for children with passage of the

landmark $750 million dollar Child Care and Development Block Grant, the expansion of Head Start by $600 million dollars, the appropriation of $300 million for At-risk children under Title IV A of the Social Security Act, and the expansion of Even Start and Chapter I efforts. Commitments to young children are rippling through the states, with most establishing commissions or task forces to assess the challenges and with many--Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri and Virginia, for example--allocating significant dollars to address them.

Concern for young children is not only manifest in policy. Research emphasizing the importance of the early years in general is growing. More specifically, new theoretical and empirical contributions are beginning to recognize the developmental importance of cultural and linguistic diversity. Rogoff (1989) has advanced a distinct, intriguing set of concepts regarding development which consider cultural variables as key ingredients for understanding cognitive and social development. Tharp (1989) and Garcia (1991) have addressed these same issues with regard to their relevance to "schooling". Chan (1990), in reflecting on growing global concerns, addresses transcendent developmental issues including the acquisition of language and culture. Tobin, Wu and Davidson (1989), in their analysis of Preschool in Three Cultures: Japan, China and the United States, explored different approaches and attitudes toward language development,

noting that while all three cultures have different notions of the power and purpose of language, teachers across cultures share the strong belief that language development is central to the mission of preschool.

While concern about language development and its relationship to cognitive development is not new, it is gaining new currency. For example, Rice (1989) notes that language development, in particular, is one of the most contentious areas in developmental psychology, one where debate is lively and data are emerging. This increased interest in language acquisition has been accompanied by a resurgence of interest in childhood bilingualism. Research has been so brisk and emanated from so many disciplines that a study group of the Society for Research in Child Development examined childhood bilingualism with the goals of summarizing work in the field and providing "bilingual and monolingual researchers an opportunity to develop an integrated model of the developmental processes operating in the bilingual child" (Homel, Palij & Aaronson, 1987). Diaz, et.al. (see this volume) addresses very directly the interrelationship of cognitive development and bilingualism, a growing issue of significance for early childhood educators.

These studies of language acquisition and child development have provided valuable insight into fundamental mental abilities, modes of linguistic knowledge, and

qualitative differences in preschoolers' and school-age children's mastery of the fundamentals of language. Recent studies of childhood bilingualism have been particularly helpful in that they refuted conventional notions that regarded bilingualism as harmful to children's mental development. Emerging research affirms the value of childhood bilingualism, indicating that, all things being equal, higher degrees of bilingualism are associated with higher levels of cognitive attainment (Diaz, 1983; Hakuta, 1986). Moreover, recent work has also underscored the critical importance of social and cultural variables related to language acquisition (Gutierrez & Garcia, 1989; Hakuta & Garcia, 1989; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988).

However remarkable these three trends--today's policy commitments, emerging cross-cultural research on preschoolers, new understanding of childhood bilingualism--they exist in comparative isolation. Legislative and programmatic advances, long debated and arduously crafted, have been parachuted into communities with little regard for their cumulative effect on the early care and education system (Kagan, 1989; Mitchell, Seligson, & Marx, 1989; Scarr & Weinberg, 1986). There has been insufficient regard for their impact on children in general, and on linguistically and culturally diverse children, in particular. We seem to learn little from other countries where commitments to cultural pluralism and language diversity are better incorporated into policy and practice. And for all

the fine American research on language acquisition and childhood bilingualism, it is a haunting paradox that so little has been explicitly devoted to multi-lingual language acquisition among very young children.

The consequence for practice and policy is that, except for the few programs that explicitly concern themselves with fostering cultural and linguistic diversity, a de facto "English is best" stance prevails in most American pre-schools and child care centers. America seems to blithely assume that what has worked programmatically for some low-income youngsters will be equally effective for youngsters from diverse settings who come to early care and education with different home languages and cultures (See Laosa and Fillmore, this volume).

Our purpose in this contribution is to suggest that such over-generalization is harmful, at worst, and terribly pre-mature, at best. In the pages that follow, we offer an analysis of why this situation has evolved, and how our knowledge--both empirical and practical--gives reason to seriously question the perpetuation of a "benign neglect" stance toward the cultural and linguistic development of preschool children. We conclude with a set of action recommendations to consider as we encourage practice and policy to be more inclusionary (See Williams, this volume) in its stance toward preschool children and their families.

THE MANY RATIONALES FOR COMPARATIVE INACTION ON BEHALF OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE PRESCHOOLERS

Four factors--beliefs, political ideology, a lack of a demographic imperative, and disciplinary fragmentation all account for the absence of concerted effort on behalf of the nation's language minority preschoolers. Fillmore (1990), McLaughlin (1984), and Soto (1991) suggest that extant belief systems eventuate in grave misconceptions about when and how children acquire language. They suggest that there is a common belief that very young children are particularly adept at picking up languages. A corollary belief suggests that the earlier youngsters are exposed to second languages, the more facile they are at incorporating the language into their verbal and conceptual repertoires. Fillmore (1990) notes that the ethos likens young children to "linguistic sponges" in that when young, they sop up new language in a year or less. Plunging young non-English dominant children into English only pre-school classes is therefore justified because the children's innate language agility will enable them to pick up English quickly, thus "rescuing" them from bilingual education in kindergarten and beyond. Despite the pervasiveness of these beliefs, the literature offers no substantiation for these practices and indicates, to the contrary, that there is no single preferable period for second language acquisition

(Hakuta, 1986).

A second rationale for limited policy attention to second-language preschoolers is that the socio-political debate regarding bilingual education for older children makes the topic too politically charged to touch. English only advocates resist the need for instruction in the home language, suggesting that such instruction is "unAmerican" and that other generations have adapted to the normative language of the country (Crawford, 1989). Underlying the argument about language is something more fundamental and political; Lawless (1986), quoting Ernest Boyer, notes that bilingual education has become a code word to larger social tensions in the nation as a whole. Questions of pedagogy have been subjected to politics; they are embroiled in issues of racism and elitism, with fundamental questions of social access and social equity. Though couching it in pedagogical terms, Politzer (1981) clearly reveals the latent classism of the situation, "upper class bilingualism is additive while lower class bilingualism is subtractive."

A third rationale suggested for the lack of policy attention is the perceived absence of a demographic imperative--that there simply are not the numbers of non-English dominant preschoolers to warrant policy attention. Despite the fact that there are grave disparities in our demographic knowledge base regarding this population, there is

evidence of a large--and growing--group of youngsters. Soto (1991) indicates that the number of non-English dominant preschoolers, ages 0-4 rose from 1.8 million in 1974 to 2.6 million in 1990. And a report from the Hispanic Policy Development Project (1988) indicated that there were 2.8 million Hispanic children 0 -6 in the United States. While all of these children clearly are not non-English dominant, many are and many are ending up in pre-schools, an estimated 27% according to the report. In fact, one analysis of Head Start enrollment (Kresh, 1990), found that 20% of Head Start's 466,000 children--or about 93,000 -were non-English dominant. (76% were considered Spanish dominant with the remaining children dominant in Cambodian, Chinese, Haitian, Japanese, Korean, Among, Vietnamese and other native and non-native U.S. languages.) While emerging data will provide a more detailed national picture of pre-schools serving non-English dominant children (Kisker, Hofferth & Phillips, in press), future numbers are sure to swell given predictions of a doubling by the year 2000 of the 2.5 million school-age children from families where English is not the primary language, coupled with the expansion of early care and education programs. In short, insufficient numbers of non-English dominant preschoolers in non-maternal care can not be used as an excuse to avoid addressing practice and policy; quite the opposite, present and predicted population trends make action imperative.

A final rationale for the comparative inattention is attributed to age-old arguments regarding the generation and application of research. Lack of disciplinary integration, opportunities to generate research related to this domain, clarity regarding existing research findings, and the challenges associated with integrating theory and practice have been discussed as impediments to a rich body of empirical work in this domain. Not to be lightly dismissed, these factors have inhibited sustained work by all but a few noted scholars. Knowledge is scattered among diverse disciplines: developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, early childhood education, and linguistics. Few incentives or mechanisms have existed to foster such cross-disciplinary research and until recently, early care and education was regarded as secondary to primary, elementary and secondary education.

QUESTIONING TODAY'S PRACTICES

Painfully aware of these ideological, political, demographic and disciplinary barriers, we acknowledge their pervasive impact on what has been. However, we are interested in fostering what could be. We know there is solid ferment in the practice and research communities. Practitioners--program directors, teachers, family workers, parent educators--are questioning the nature and quality of services to

linguistically and culturally diverse preschoolers. Some are concerned because they recognize that multicultural experiences are reduced to a celebration of the artifacts of culture--foods, fashions and festivals--which, while important, do not penetrate latent value issues associated with culture (See Williams, this volume). Culture is regarded as a superficial overlay, a set of activities scheduled for a particular time slot, not a pervasive approach to understanding and nurturing development.

Others express special concern for children who do not speak English upon entry to non-familial care or education. Often there is no one in the child's program who speaks the home language. This is particularly true in large urban settings where as many as 8 or 10 different languages or cultures may be represented in the group. Even if the teacher is bi- or multi-lingual, he or she may not be conversant in the range of languages represented by the children. More commonly, groups of children are more homogeneous, making matched language staffing easier. In centers or programs that are not tightly regulated or regulated at all, it is fairly easy to incorporate adults who speak the children's language. In contrast, tightly regulated settings--such as schools--often have less teacher recruitment and assignment flexibility because of certification requirements, tenure, and union agreements. In such settings, it is not at all uncommon to see

well-intentioned English-only teachers struggling to understand and guide non-English dominant children, and to see the vitality and exuberance of earnest non-anglo children exhausted by their futile efforts to be understood.

The optimal situation for supporting young children requires the caregiver's language to match that of the child and child's family. Providing the native language in the caregiving situation supports and reinforces many rich encounters the child has with language within the family. As children begin speaking, it is very important for them to be exposed, even "bathed" in rich and mutually supportive linguistic environments. Since language, intellectual and social development are so closely linked, young children whose native language is present in the home, community and early care settings will encounter more vocabulary, grammar, ideas and concepts. This broad range of linguistic, social and cognitive experiences in natural situations enriches the development of language and intellectual functioning.

What if it is impossible to provide native language or bilingual caregivers/teachers? Won't this harm the linguistic development of these young children? Certainly, if the caregiver refuses to interact with the child or signals the negative perception of the absence of English by the child, serious negative non-communicative effects on behalf of the child can result. However, it is important to note that over

60% of any communicative act is nonverbal. We all know that infants communicate initially by pointing, crying, wiggling, nodding, grimacing and the like. Therefore the best approach to handling a mismatch is to recognize it exists and assure that the caregiver/teacher attends to all of the child's communicative signals, responding naturally with understanding and a visible, even exaggerated, willingness to make all communication meaningful. Consequently, teachers must be extremely sensitive to both their verbal and non-verbal communication.

An unfortunate social occurrence often reported in early childhood settings with culturally and linguistically diverse children is the caregiver's/teacher's tendency to perceive non-English dominant children and their families as foreigners. The noticeable fact that the children and their families do not speak English marks them as different, with the observed differences sometimes leading to negative feelings and treatment. This uncomfortable social circumstance often results in practices which attempt to minimize this difference by ridding these children and their families of the attributes that make them different. The tendency to "Americanize" perceived "foreigners," even when they are native, has been documented for over a century (Gonzalez, 1990). Unfortunately, such attempts only develop suspicion and negative reactions from children and their families. Rather than attempting to

minimize diversity, appreciating and respecting diversity and eliminating the "foreigner" perception can enrich all our lives.

Beyond the classroom, caregivers and teachers report that often no over-arching plan guides service delivery, so that even if pedagogy and social interactions are appropriate, support services do not take needs occasioned by cultural and language differences into account. Families, while encouraged to become involved in preschool settings, often find the pace, tone, and structure foreign and disquieting. Often parents invited in to programs to share their "culture," while feeling momentarily validated, subsequently feel betrayed by the superficial attention accorded culture.

Part of the dilemma has been addressed by pedagogical refinements, most notably those fostered by Head Start's exemplary work in the Bilingual Early Childhood Effort. From this landmark study, we learned that additive preschool curricula are effective (Juarez and Associates, 1980). Building on this experience, consideration is being given to new modes of instruction (See Pease-Alvarez, Garcia, & Espinosa, this volume). Volumes related to anti-bias curriculum are emerging and multi-cultural curricula are taking hold (Arenas, 1980; Derman-Sparks, 1989; Williams, DeGaetano, Harrington & Sutherland, 1985). And inventive staffing patterns and exceptions to certification requirements are being

implemented. Indeed, strategies that break with convention seem to provide promising antidotes; non-hierarchical staffing patterns, ombudsmen/women knowledgeable about the community, caring staff who genuinely solicit parent advice regarding their children, outreach for family support, career opportunities for employment and advancement, and the provision of direct services--transportation and sibling care. Programs that embody these characteristics--such as "Avance "in Texas and "Centro Familiar" in California--exist and are potent models for recontouring service delivery and realigning the role of culture in child and family efforts.

However encouraging, these tend to be isolated efforts led by charismatic individuals who are imbued with a sense of mission and vision. For the most part, these efforts remain remote from mainstream activities of schools or other bureaucratic institutions. Lessons and programs, while they could be transferred (Juarez & Associates, 1980), routinely are not. Many teachers of English-dominant children and many child care teachers do not understand the differences between transitional, maintenance and two-way bilingual programs described by Soto (1991). Practitioners report implementing activities without the benefit of deeply-rooted pedagogical understandings, and without benefit of knowledge of differential impacts of program modalities. They are concerned about imposing strategies of questionable merit and ethically

question the distancing between child and family that English-only programs inherently inflict (See Fillmore, this volume).

Impelled by these experiences, practitioners--joined by researchers--are debating four fundamental issues:

1) Socialization, Resocialization and the Family/Child Relationship

   If the family is as powerful a socializer of the young child as we have thought, what are the social, emotional, and cognitive consequences of early childhood programs that effectively seek to re-socialize children to a new set standards? What is the consequence for parents and for the parent-child relationship when primary communication in the home is in a language different from that of the preschool (Fillmore, 1990)?

2) Modalities of Instruction

   Given the lack of a multitude of studies comparing effective preschool bilingual interventions, what modality should be adopted for which children? How do we make early childhood settings supportive of second-languages learners?

3) Contextually Discontinuous Strategies

   What is the value of investing in quality preschool bilingual/multicultural efforts if children move into

schools with different values and programs? What is the consequence of contextually disproportionate investments and discontinuous strategies?

4) Sub-system Creation or System Reform

Is our function to create a new sub-system, within the existing system or to reform/restructure services so that they will be adaptive and responsive to diverse child and family need?

MOVING TOWARD TOMORROW

Moving forward will not happen without strategic attention to the questions raised above and without a plan of action. In this section we address both. Using the best information we have at hand, we first offer responses to each of the content questions just raised. Second, we suggest several process strategies we believe will help propel the education of linguistically and culturally diverse preschoolers to its rightful place on the national policy agenda.

Addressing the Issues

Socialization, Resocialization and the Family/Child Relationship

Our knowledge indicates that some cultures socialize their

young children in ways that are more compatible with the values and norms of American schools. Heath's (1983) work indicates that children from middle class families studied interact verbally with infants, and regard children as separate individuals, capable of knowing and doing. When these youngsters enter school, they are adept at negotiating the demands of school life. In contrast, Heath found that black working class families shrouded their infants with physical affection, but did not engage in verbal communication as frequently. To gain access to adult dominated conversation, the children needed to be assertive. Not surprisingly, Heath notes that when these children go to school, they encounter difficulty in language elaboration and in adjusting to normative rules that govern classroom interaction--turn-taking, etc. Recent research with Hispanic children suggests similar culturally relevant findings. That work indicates that Mexican American children are most challenged with regard to higher order linguistic and cognitive interactions by their peers as opposed to their adult teacher. It was in the child-to-child interactions that such higher order exchanges were identified. Unfortunately, teacher-child exchanges tended to be quite rudimentary with teachers simply requesting students to respond with memorized facts (Garcia, 1988).

Heath's and Garcia's work is instructive because it raises important questions about the congruence of home and family

practices, and about the propensity of American schools to value mainstream cultures at the expense of others. One clear implication is that schools must be more strategically inventive and open as they deal with non-mainstream populations. Home values, cultures, languages and norms must be factored in to children's educational plans. Moreover, families from minority backgrounds need to have a clearer understanding of school expectations, and, where necessary and appropriate, supports to help address those expectations.

Of more serious concern is what happens when the home/school schism is so incongruous that such efforts or supports are virtually meaningless. Fillmore (See this volume) has indicated that when youngsters are placed in non-home language programs at an early age, they may loose their home language, thus separating them from the language of the family unit. Parents and children are no longer able to communicate, parental support is truncated, and family unity and intimacy diminished.

Not the odd case, such scenarios are the all-too-frequent by-products of a system caught in the socialization/ resocialization conundrum. Clearly, an appropriate function of education is socialization and it is not unrealistic to expect that older children will accommodate such norms. However, asking very young children to be resocialized, just as formative socialization is taking place, unduly burdens them.

Pre-school programs have the responsibility of serving children and families in ways that maximize the strength of both. Mono-lingual and mono-cultural education that segregates children from families is unacceptable early childhood practice.

Modalities of Instruction

Despite mounting research in childhood bilingualism and linguistics, and despite wonderful guides on multicultural education, teachers find themselves in a pedagogical quandary regarding the nature and language of instruction. How much and what parts of the programs should be conducted in home language? For which children? Under which conditions?

Work done in the Head Start Bilingual Early Childhood Education project has been most helpful in identifying four approaches: Un Marco Abierto, Nuevas Fronteras de Aprendizje, Alerta, and Amanecer. More work of this kind, particularly as it is appropriate to very young children, is necessary. Adaptations for family day and group home care would be helpful as well.

A deeper appreciation for linguistic and cultural diversity requires a responsible socio-cultural pedagogy (Gutierrez and Garcia, 1989). This new pedagogy defines the early childhood classroom as a community of learners in which various voices come together to define and redefine the meaning

of the academic experience. It has been described as a pedagogy of empowerment and cultural learning. It argues for the respect and integration of the student's values, beliefs, histories, and experiences and recognizes the active role that students must play in the teaching/learning process. However, this responsible pedagogy expands student's knowledge beyond their immediate knowledge and expertise while utilizing that knowledge and expertise as a sound foundation for appropriating new knowledge. For linguistically and culturally diverse children, this includes the use of linguistically and culturally compatible strategies which are a substantive part of a well functioning social network in which knowledge is embedded. (See Pease-Alvarez, Garcia, & Espinosa, this volume.)

Contextually discontinuous strategies

Developmental theory has long endorsed the concept that children's experiences should be continuous between both the time periods--from year to year--and spheres--home to program--of their lives (Rogoff, 1990; Zigler & Kagan, 1982). Because such continuity fosters healthy growth and development and is so necessary for young children, numerous efforts to imbue early care and education services with continuity exist, e.g., parent involvement, developmental continuity, continuous learning, and transition. Paradoxically, while much effort and considerable dollars are expended in fostering continuity for

mainstream children and families, less is directed to assuring continuity for language minority children. Discontinuity for this population is not only accepted, but is encouraged by proponents of English immersion strategies. Given what we know about development and about how all children learn, strategies that abruptly disengage children from the core of family context are dysfunctional and should be avoided in practice and policy. Moreover, policy must acknowledge that what is beneficial for all young children is also essential for non-English dominant preschoolers.

The other side of continuity, that of maintaining continuity as children move through the years or grades, is equally troublesome. It has been argued that preschool and early childhood programs need to plan their strategies predicated on what children will experience next. This has been the rationale for getting children "ready" for school, for using preschool programs as training centers or boot camps for kindergarten. The press to prepare children for "what comes next" has become so pervasive that roughly two-thirds of teachers in several studies report feeling professionally compromised and being unable to teach in ways they deem appropriate (Bryant, Clifford & Peisner, 1989; Hatch & Freeman, 1988; Smith, 1987). In short, the press to conform to what comes next has resulted in a compromise of quality in what is done now.

For children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, the argument is particularly spurious. Predicated on the reality that these children have no linguistically appropriate kindergarten or first grade to attend, well-intentioned preschool teachers--applying the principle of continuity and its operational corollary, readiness--rationalize the benefit of linguistically inappropriate preschools. The thinking goes, "Well,if the schools don't have effective bilingual programs, isn't it in the child's best interest to ready him/her in English for the mainstream kindergartens that follow?" Our response to such dilemmas is "no." Just as preschool teachers of mainstream youngsters may need to implement their own developmentally appropriate programs AND also foster them in other settings--like the public schools--teachers of linguistically and culturally diverse children must not acquiesce because of improper settings at kindergarten; they must realize that fostering continuity of what is pedagogically appropriate means advocating for continuity and quality beyond their own classrooms (Hakuta & Garcia, 1989).

Sub-system creation or system reform

Opponents of bilingual education have expressed concern that creating such services will result in the formation of a system within a system (Lawless, 1986). Separating children by

language, they argue, is blatant segregation, defying the law and spirit of the land. Moreover, opponents contend that such efforts create "a bilingual support industry--a pipeline to Federal money." One is tempted to offer as rationale the fact that when many populations needed support, the federal response was to "target"--a gentle euphemism for segregate--children. For example, Head Start entry guidelines--though they allow for a small minority of over-income children--clearly segregate children by income. Chapter I guidelines segregate children according to educational need. And both of these necessary programs have been federal pipelines to communities. What is so different with language minority children? Are they in no less educational or perhaps economic need?

Though accurate conceptually, that analogy is flawed practically. As a society we are not fully satisfied with Head Start's income segregation or with the pull-out and targeted services of Chapter I. Ideally, we want to concentrate services where they are needed and foster social and educational integration. Effective bilingual programs do just that; they serve children by giving them the tools for effective social and educational integration. But they understand child development and recognize that--like development itself--the process is gradual. In Vygotskian terms, they create a scaffold, enabling children to grow. Effective bilingual programs are not ends in themselves, but

the means to the end. As such, they do not represent a separate sub-system existing within a larger unit. Rather, they represent an approach to system reform that warrants attention. Effective bilingual/multicultural programs take a long haul view, discerning both the social and educational ends of schooling.

An alternative to such segregation has recently become available through the implementation of "double-bilingual" programs (Lindholm, 1990). The goal of these programs is to produce bilingual and biliterate children. Such programs require high participation rates of both English speaking and non-English speaking students. Over time, but beginning in early childhood settings, children develop communication and content knowledge in two languages. During the early years of such a program, English speaking children are "immersed" in non-English instructional environments with non-English speaking peers. Such a program provides for non-English speaking children to garner strong communicative skills in their native language, while English speaking students begin the mastery of the non-English language. Such an "immersion" for English speaking children does not negatively influence their English abilities since our society places such a prestigious "mark" on the English language. What it does allow is the development of non-English communicative skills in a naturally occurring situation with children competent in the

non-English language. In essence, this program makes the non-English speaking students the "experts"--it levels the communicative playing field for the non-English speaking children. The future of maximally effective bilingual programs lies in this integration model.

Taking the Action Steps

While mounting research and experience affirm the value of multilingual/multicultural education, these efforts are sadly remote from the experiences of many American preschool children. The challenge at hand is to convert what we know into what we as a nation practice. Although several strategies to that end have been implied throughout this paper, we wish to make them explicit. Taking action has several steps including codifying action principles and taking action through leadership.

Action Principles

Principles that undergird pedagogy are clear, but we are less clear of the principles that should guide action. As a preliminary list, we suggest:

1) To the maximum extent feasible, practice/policy should be grounded in practical, empirical and

theoretical work.

2) Because knowledge is never perfect, action can not wait until all the questions are raised and solutions studied. There is always some risk to policy.

3) Policy is most effective when it is synergistic with the national events or the political Zeitgeist.

4) America will not create policy until it understands the pervasiveness, magnitude, and impact of the challenge we face with regard to our diverse populations.

5) No policy will insure early childhood program quality without a sincere regard for the physical and mental well-being of our linguistically and culturally diverse children. They must be embraced as "our" children.

Taking Action Through Leadership

Unfortunately, the above principles alone will not be enough to meet the significant challenge we face without concerted leadership. We will need leadership that recognizes the importance of the following domains: 1) Knowledge Transmission; 2) Skill Development; 3) Disposition for Leadership; and 4) Affective Engagement.

Knowledge transmission. From this volume alone, it is clear that we are not without a growing knowledge base in

addressing the needs of linguistically and culturally diverse children. However, we need to disseminate this knowledge, a task that requires the development and implementation of strategies that put information into the hands of those who can best utilize it. Institutionally and individually, new knowledge must be appropriated by those in the field. This requires, at a minimum, training and re-training initiatives at local, state and national levels. It is of no use for researchers to share their findings only with one another without concomitant efforts to share new knowledge with those on the "front-lines" of meeting this significant challenge. Leadership in knowledge base dissemination and appropriation are required.

Skill development. New knowledge alone will not automatically transfer into new pedagogical and curricular skills by those working directly with children and parents. New knowledge must be carefully and articulately translated/transferred to specific care and instructional contexts. Time and energy must be devoted to developing these functional and context-specific skills that are directly based on new knowledge and its relationship to the skills that early childhood professionals already exemplify. Clearly, leadership from both inside and outside the profession is required for moving the field beyond knowledge generation to knowledge application.

Dispositions of leadership. In any innovation, individuals influenced by such innovations will fall into three categories: those who accept and lead; those who stand aside; and those who resist. To meet the substantial challenges we face with regard to linguistically and culturally diverse preschoolers, we need a generation of dedicated leaders who are willing to take risks, shift paradigms, tolerate frustration, and collaborate intensely with diverse colleagues. For many, such demands are too burdensome. They may elect to step aside, recognizing that with this challenge comes a long-standing politically intense agenda that challenges practice conventions of equity, empowerment, americanization and assimilation. Those who elect to forge new ground will be required to move beyond a political agenda, utilizing empirical knowledge, professional expertise, and family and community input, clearly understanding that professional duties can not be compromised for political doctrine.

Affective engagement. Most importantly, we need leadership that truly embraces culturally diverse children as our own, leadership that embraces them, nurtures them, celebrates them, and challenges them to be all they can be. Such affective engagement demands that we not give up hope for culturally and linguistically diverse children, though many, by the time they are adolescents, have given up hope in themselves. Some educational colleagues have argued that we

have lost the ability to inspire these children. Others might even argue that we have lost the ability to inspire ourselves with regard to this population. We cannot engage in this challenge without inspiration; it is the mother and father of resolve and leadership.

Above all, we are called to action. Returning to the quotation that opened this paper, we believe that the collective task of early care and education and multicultural/bilingual education is enabling the future. Though we can not foresee or predict it, we know what happens toady influences the future. We know that with knowledge, commitment, skills, and inspiration, we can and must create a more just and equitable future for our linguistically and culturally diverse preschoolers and our linguistically and culturally diverse society. It is to that goal that our work on this special issue is dedicated.

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